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PART

FOREIGN OFFICE | DEPT. ARABIAN

File No. B 3/15

TITLE: PERSIAN GULF : POLITICAL AFFAIRS (EXTERNAL):

THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS : EFFECTS OF.

CLOSED UNTIL 1995

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ARABIA
28 June, 1967
Section 1

THE SOUTHERN GULF STATES AND THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Sir Stewart Crawford to Mr. Brown. (*Received 28 June*)

SUMMARY

1. These States came through with comparatively little disturbance considering the tragic nature of the events as seen by the Arabs, and their conviction that Her Majesty's Government's attitude was pro-Israel. (Paragraphs 1–2.)

2. More trouble in Doha and Dubai than in Bahrain. All quiet in the Sultanate and virtually so in Abu Dhabi. (Paragraph 3.)

3. Position in Trucial Oman Scouts, where two Arab officers resigned. Sawt al Sahil radio station was effective. (Paragraph 4.)

4. Action taken by the Rulers to contain popular pressures on them. Position on oil exports. (Paragraph 5.)

5. The crisis has drawn the Southern Gulf more into the Arab world than before, especially over Palestine issue. The people think our policy is anti-Arab and it will be hard to correct this. Nasser's position, at least in the short run, appears strong. Events here will be largely determined by what London, Cairo and Washington do and say. The Gulf States' oil policy will tend to follow fairly closely that of the other main Arab oil-producing countries despite desire of the Rulers to avoid damage to us. (Paragraph 6.)

6. Situation remains very uneasy and there is need for pro-Arab statements by Her Majesty's Government, particularly on territorial issues. Otherwise we risk growing difficulties over which Rulers will be less able to help than in the past. Continued stability in the Gulf as important as ever, but more dependent than in the past on our policies in Northern part of Arab world. (Paragraph 7.)

7. There may now be more speculation by Rulers about the long-term future but the basic problems of the Southern Gulf have not been changed by the crisis. We must continue with present policies and maintain confidence of Rulers in our remaining to help them. Above all we must avoid adoption of a target date for withdrawal, since this would become known and seriously increase our difficulties in finding an alternative security system in the Gulf which would enable us eventually to withdraw. (Paragraph 8.)

(No. 19. Confidential) *Bahrain,*
Sir, *23 June, 1967.*

I have the honour to report on events in the Southern part of the Persian Gulf resulting from the recent Arab-Israel crisis which culminated in the fighting of the week beginning the 5th of June.

2. The Southern Gulf States came through these events with comparatively little surface disturbance considering the magnitude of the crisis, the depth of feeling among all urban and literate Arabs about the Palestine problem, the extent of the humiliation suffered by the Arab countries in the war, and the widespread conviction that Israel had the moral and political, if not the physical, backing of Britain and America. This latter conviction is based on the bitterly hostile propaganda against Britain and America which has poured from the radio stations in the northern part of

the Arab world and which was to a large extent echoed by the broadcasts of Kuwait; the most was made of the accusation that in standing up for international freedom of passage through the Straits of Tiran we were supporting a policy aim of the Israel Government, and of the accusations made against us by the UAR Government that our aircraft had joined in the fighting on the Israel side. The need for an alibi for the Arab defeat provided an additional reason why these accusations were and continue to be believed by many; they have probably now acquired the status of a myth which rational argument cannot eradicate, and have left behind a dangerous legacy of hatred for us, especially among the young. Against this background, it is surprising that there was not more violence against British and American agencies, firms and people.

3. The chief surprise was in Bahrain. For a variety of reasons, including the success with which the Ruler handled his people and their demands for action in support of the Arab cause, skilful control of the police, and the deterrent effect of the presence of a battalion of British troops in the background, the island came through the crisis remarkably peacefully, with only minor instances of overt damage and sabotage. The Bahrain situation has been analysed by the Political Agent, Bahrain, in his report enclosed with my despatch No. 18. On the other hand, both in Doha and in Dubai, demonstrations were accompanied by some violence until the Rulers took vigorous and effective action to suppress it. In Doha, where the Palestine Liberation Organisation is strong and active and where, fortuitously, local tension had recently arisen as a result of contamination of flour in a Palestinian bakery which caused the poisoning of a large number of people, of whom seven died, there was a serious demonstration on the 5th of June, when the Political Agency suffered a number of broken windows and other minor damage. Later in the week, when the news of the UAR's defeat and of Nasser's resignation reached the security force, which contains a substantial number of men of Yemeni/Yafei origin, there was a temporary breakdown of order, fortunately confined to the Police Fort, where the Deputy Ruler had to intervene in person, with the assistance of family retainers, before order could be restored. There were also some instances of damage caused by sabotage to the Qatar Petroleum Company's pipelines and to a well-head. In Dubai there was serious rioting on the 7th and the 8th of June, led by Palestinians and exploited by hooligans of a variety of racial origins, in which extensive damage was done to property, including a number of buildings of British firms, though no serious personal injuries were caused. The troublemakers seem to have been encouraged by the Kuwait State Office and by some of the nationalist-minded local merchants; the scale and violence of the rioting took the authorities by surprise, but it was then quickly suppressed by the Ruler's police. In Sharjah there were some minor acts of destruction, including the cutting of the cable between the studio and transmission room of the Sawt al Sahil radio station. In Ras al Khaimah there were demonstrations and some stone-throwing but that was all. By contrast, in Abu Dhabi, the police had no difficulty in controlling the small demonstrations that took place and there was no violence; nor is there even now much anti-British sentiment. In the Sultanate there was no public manifestation of feeling whatsoever, and probably only a few of the town dwellers of Muscat and Mattrah felt themselves involved at all. To sum up, it was only in the towns of Manama and Muharraq in Bahrain, Doha in Qatar, and Dubai and Sharjah, that serious demonstrations occurred and only in Doha and Dubai, in both of which there live a substantial number of Palestinians, that there was any violence to speak of and, even there, it was by Middle East standards small. In none of the States did the Rulers have any difficulty in restoring order once it was threatened, though in Qatar the Ruler had to have recourse to his own retainers, the "fidawi", who proved in this particular situation more reliable and effective than the security force with its large Yemeni element. I should add that the Yemenis in the Bahrain State Police played their part loyally.

4. A particular mention is needed of the Trucial Oman Scouts, whose assistance was called upon in Dubai. There was no need for them to take a hand in suppressing the rioters, but they were helpful in guarding the Political Agency and other key points and on escort duties. They carried out without hesitation all they were asked to do, despite some indications before the fighting started that they had been emotionally affected by events in the North. However, at the end of the crisis, the two senior Arab officers,

both belonging to the Qasimi family which provides the Rulers of Sharjah and Ras al Khaimah, submitted their resignations; both agreed to take leave in order to think about the matter further, but both are reported to have visited Kuwait at the time of the Arab Foreign Ministers' meeting on the 17th of June. It seems probable that one or both will in the end leave the force. It is doubtful whether these two officers have much of a following among the Scouts, where men of Northern Trucial States' origin are in a minority; nevertheless, their attitude is a pointer to the need for a close watch to be kept on the state of feeling of the Scouts should Her Majesty's Government's policy over Palestine continue for long to be under heavy attack by the principal Arab countries. This is simply one, but an important, aspect of the need for us to pay particular attention to Arab opinion in determining our Middle East policy. Despite the sabotage of a cable and other difficulties, the Sawt al Sahil radio station which operates in the Trucial Oman Scouts camp, maintained its broadcasts and balanced presentation of news throughout the crisis, increased its audience and enhanced its reputation with the local Rulers.

5. The Rulers of all the principal States handled the crisis successfully and I do not think that their position has been weakened. All kept in close touch with the respective Political Agents, all managed to combine the right degree of firmness in keeping order or restoring it once it had broken down, with the making of adequate concessions to popular feeling, whether in the sending of messages, the opening of recruiting offices and the despatch of volunteers, the sanctioning of the collection of money or the imposition of restrictions on oil exports. The latter was the subject which was of most direct concern to ourselves and caused the most difficulty to the Rulers. Given the strength of feeling about Israel throughout the Arab world, the belief in our support for Israel and the passage of the sanctions resolution by the Arab oil conference in Baghdad, it was inevitable that the Rulers of the oil-producing States of Bahrain, Qatar and Abu Dhabi should come under heavy pressure to follow their larger neighbours, despite their own strong preference to stand aside. They had also to reckon with their own labour force, who had the whiphand at the loading terminals. After some anxious moments all three came into line with the position as they understood it in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and imposed a ban, they hope temporary only, on loadings for Britain and the United States. The Ruler of Qatar initially banned also the loading of British and American tankers, regardless of destination, but has now withdrawn this further restriction; his example was not followed in the other two States: British tankers have been loaded at Das Island, Abu Dhabi, as a result of a firm order given by the Ruler, and a Royal Fleet Auxiliary has loaded in Bahrain, though not as yet a British or United States warship. So far as I can judge the restrictions imposed so far cause us inconvenience rather than damage, but I hope that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait do not adopt greater restrictions than these, or the Rulers will come under pressure to follow them. As a contrast, the Sultan of Muscat expressed to me his regret that oil exports had not yet started from his territory, since he would have been glad to see oil going to Britain and America. Exports on a regular basis are not expected to start until the end of September this year, but when they do so, there will then be an alternative source near the Gulf, both for crude and for bunker fuel. In the other oil-producing States, however, the situation will continue uneasy, despite the concern of their Rulers to do nothing to cause us any serious harm.

6. It is too soon to draw any profound conclusions from the events of the last month, except that they have probably had a permanent effect on the situation of the Southern Gulf, as in other parts of the Middle East. With the exception of the Sultanate, the Southern Gulf States are now likely, in different degrees, to be drawn even more than in the past within the general ambit of the Arab world and to be exposed more directly than before to its political cross-currents. Because the Palestinian question has been the catalyst, many Arabs for whom Palestine was not in the recent past a serious issue, will now be strong partisans, and will use this issue as the touchstone for judging our attitude towards them and their cause. It will be very difficult in the time ahead to convince the people here that our policy has not been anti-Arab. Whether or not they come eventually to doubt the truth of the accusation that we and the United States gave military help to the Israelis during the fighting, they will believe that we gave at least moral support and encouragement. It

is too early to judge whether and how far President Nasser's reputation will in the long run suffer from the Arab defeat; although the Rulers would undoubtedly all be happy if he were to disappear, their people or at any rate those of them living in and near the towns, can be assumed still to see Nasser, in the short term at any rate, as their leader and spokesman, almost more firmly entrenched than ever and they will be at least as much as in the past influenced by his speeches. Events here are thus likely to be influenced less by local developments than by policy pronouncements made and attitudes adopted in London, Cairo, Washington, New York and possibly Moscow. Although we have got through this crisis with remarkably little violence and, apart from the gesture of the ban on oil exports to Britain and America, no damage to our position, feelings against us, particularly among many young Arabs, will be bitterly hostile and the situation will continue to be very disturbed underneath the surface, especially when the general population comes more completely out of the state of shock into which it was plunged by the suddenness and completeness of the Arab defeat. Finally, the way in which the embargo on oil exports to Britain and America has been imposed on unwilling Rulers by the consensus of the main Arab oil-producing countries and by the members of their labour forces, teaches us that in the future we must expect the political aspects of oil policy in these States, other than the Sultanate, to tend to follow fairly closely those of the other main Arab oil-producing countries.

7. All these considerations point to the importance of Her Majesty's Government taking a pro-Arab line in their statements of policy, particularly on the crucial territorial issues which have to be settled during the long and difficult months ahead, to balance what the Arabs have convinced themselves to be manifestations of a pro-Israel policy on our part. The clear position we have taken up, that war must not lead to territorial aggrandisement will, I hope, make its mark; public opinion will, however, be more affected by what is said about particular territorial issues, and your emphatic call in the General Assembly to the Israel Government not to hold on to the Old City of Jerusalem will I am sure be especially welcomed, particularly by the vocal minority of Palestinians in the Gulf States. The effect would be more notable if you, Sir, could say something similar about Jordan's West Bank territory as a whole. The danger is that if in this and other ways we cannot persuade the Arab population of our sympathy for them, we shall encounter growing difficulties over oil exports, over commercial relations and perhaps over facilities for the armed forces. We have the unquestioned goodwill of all the principal Rulers, who have done as little to inconvenience us as they felt they could get away with, but the freedom of decision of most of them (I except the Sultan of Muscat and Oman) has now become more circumscribed than it was before. The maintenance of stability in the Gulf area, with our help, remains as important as ever, but it has now become more dependent than previously on our pursuing a policy in the northern part of the Arab world acceptable to the Arabs as a whole. I trust that, as the aftermath of the crisis evolves, this will be given full weight in deciding on the policy to be followed in the Middle East for the protection of British interests, which must undoubtedly be our primary guiding principle.

8. I should like to make one final comment. The crisis has given this area a shock and it would be surprising if this shock were to have no effect on the thinking of the Rulers about the future. I do not believe any of them will turn against us, although we must expect Shaikh Saqr of Ras al Khaimah to be even more careful about keeping a line out to Cairo. We may, however, find the principal Rulers speculating more openly than in the past about our eventual departure from the Gulf and perhaps making certain dispositions, whether the strengthening of their own local security forces or reinsuring more actively with Saudi Arabia. This may be no bad thing and in any case we cannot prevent it. But we must remember that the basic situation in the Gulf has not changed; there are still unsolved territorial disputes and local threats to stability, the principal States have still a good way to go in terms of economic, social and administrative development before they can stand on their own feet, and the exploitation of the new oil resources of the Southern part of the area is still in its early stages and the financial benefits are only just beginning to be felt. Moreover, we have to get the Gulf through the period of our withdrawal from South Arabia and the possibly disturbed aftermath. These continue to be very

strong reasons why the Gulf States will need our presence for some time to come, and why we should continue steadily along our present course, despite the possible increase of difficulties caused by the recent crisis. Above all, it remains essential that the Rulers should continue to have confidence in our doing so. This is material to any consideration which may now be given by Her Majesty's Government to our long-term policy in the Middle East and to our defence programme. Any adoption of a programme which envisaged our withdrawal by a target date would, if it became known, as it could hardly fail to do, administer an irreparable shock to the Rulers' confidence in us and in many ways increase and not reduce our difficulties in finding an alternative security system in the Gulf which would enable us eventually to withdraw our forces.

9. I am sending a copy of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Aden, Amman, Beirut, Jedda, Karachi, Kuwait, Tel Aviv and Washington, to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Command, Aden, to the Political Agents at Bahrain, Doha, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and to Her Majesty's Consul-General at Muscat, and to the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Power in London.

I have, &c.

R. S. CRAWFORD.

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Summary of Bahrain Despatch No. 19 of 23 June, 1967: The Southern Gulf States and the Middle East Crisis

RECEIVED IN ARCHIVES No. 5
28 JUN 1967
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CONFIDENTIAL

BRITISH RESIDENCY,
BAHRAIN.
23 June, 1967

Despatch No. 19
(1073/312/67)

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/Straits

The Right Honourable
George Brown, M.P.,
Etc., Etc., Etc.,
Foreign Office, S. W. 1.

CONFIDENTIAL

Straits of Tiran we were supporting a policy aim of the Israel Government, and of the accusations made against us by the U.A.R. Government that our aircraft had joined in the fighting on the Israel side. The need for an alibi for the Arab defeat provided an additional reason why these accusations were and continue to be believed by many; they have probably now acquired the status of a myth which rational argument cannot eradicate, and have left behind a dangerous legacy of hatred for us, especially among the young. Against this background, it is surprising that there was not more violence against British and American agencies, firms and people.

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8. I should like to make one final comment. The crisis has given this area a shock and it would be surprising if this shock were to have no effect on the thinking of the Rulers about the future. I do not believe any of them will turn against us, although we must expect Shaikh Saqr of Ras al Khaimah to be even more careful about keeping a line out to Cairo. We may, however, find the principal Rulers speculating more openly than in the past about our

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eventual departure from the Gulf and perhaps making certain dispositions, whether the strengthening of their own local security forces or reinsuring more actively with Saudi Arabia. This may be no bad thing and in any case we cannot prevent it. But we must remember that the basic situation in the Gulf has not changed; there are still unsolved territorial disputes and local threats to stability, the principal States have still a good way to go in terms of economic, social and administrative development before they can stand on their own feet, and the exploitation of the new oil resources of the Southern part of the area is still in its early stages and the financial benefits are only just beginning to be felt. Moreover, we have to get the Gulf through the period of our withdrawal from South Arabia and the possibly disturbed aftermath. These continue to be very strong reasons why the Gulf States will need our presence for some time to come, and why we should continue steadily along our present course, despite the possible increase of difficulties caused by the recent crisis. Above all, it remains essential that the Rulers should continue to have confidence in our doing so. This is material to any consideration which may now be given by Her

/Majesty's

Majesty's Government to our long-term policy in the Middle East and to our defence programme. Any adoption of a programme which envisaged our withdrawal by a target date would, if it became known, as it could hardly fail to do, administer an irreparable shock to the Rulers' confidence in us and in many ways increase and not reduce our difficulties in finding an alternative security system in the Gulf which would enable us eventually to withdraw our forces.

9. I am sending a copy of this despatch to H.M. Representatives at Aden, Amman, Beirut, Jedda, Karachi, Kuwait, Tel Aviv and Washington, to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Command, Aden, to the Political Agents at Bahrain, Doha, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and to H.M. Consul-General at Muscat, and to the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Power in London.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,
Sir,
your obedient servant.

Stewart Crawford.

(R. S. Crawford)

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7-JUL 1967
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Eastern Dept. Mr. Saunders,
I am not sure what
sort of visits are involved
Fitzherbert
12/7.

Business from Beirut

Mr. Eastwood. Will Saunders 12/7

pla 13/7.

ADDRESSED TO BEIRUT TEL NO 137 OF 7 JULY RPT FOREIGN OFFICE

AND SAVING AMMAN, KUWAIT, DOHA, DUBAI, ABU DHABI AND

MANAMA AGENCY.

MANAMA AGENCY TELNO 45 29 JUNE. VISITS.

THE POSITION IN OTHER GULF MARKETS IS SIMILAR AND OUR ADVICE FOR

THEM ACCORDS WITH LAST SENTENCE OF TELEGRAM UNDER REFERENCE

CRAWFORD

Files

Arabian Dept.
Eastern "

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Whitaker
W.C.129
S.A.D.K.
Top Sec. K.117

[Arabian Dept.]

DSTR

Mr. Stirling
Mr. Weir.

Reference (W1) 12

The Southern Gulf and the Middle East Crisis

The Political Resident's account of events in the Southern Gulf during the recent crisis brings out the extent to which the protected Gulf States are increasingly being drawn into the mainstream of Arab affairs. This is clearly a trend which is likely to become more pronounced but it is nonetheless encouraging that the disturbances in the area during the crisis were not more extensive. Much of what trouble there was originated with Palestinians and other non-local elements and the Rulers acquitted themselves well in maintaining law and order without arousing antagonism against themselves. As the Political Resident suggests, they now go on to look more closely at this position, and draw the obvious conclusion that it is important to reduce their dependence on foreigners and to strengthen this administration and security arrangements, the episode may possibly turn out to have been quite salutary. P. Hunt 13/7

/This

This despatch has been sent for printing FO/CO/WH..

2. The weathering of the crisis is most creditable to our people in the Gulf (and to their predecessors); but, as some of them have remarked, things will not be the same again. The crisis has pushed the Gulf States across the dividing line, on which they have been hovering, between the insulation of British protection and the horrible world of Arab politics. As the Political Resident says, the basic problems have not changed; but the atmosphere has and the solution of the problems will be increasingly complicated by the Arab cause. At the same time I agree that there will be some compensation for our additional difficulties if the Rulers, in hedging their bets, take to standing on their own feet.

P.J.D. Stirling
17/7

Put away.

2/8

(3)

CONFIDENTIAL

BRITISH EMBASSY,
AMMAN.

(1031/67)

24 July 1967

Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak al Khalifah N/R.

Your telegram number 12 of 18 July warned me of the arrival of Shaikh Mohammed in Amman. In fact he arrived a day later from Cairo and was well received by the Jordan government; a number of Ministers, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, excused themselves from a dinner party which the Ambassador was giving for four visiting M.P.s in order to be able to entertain Shaikh Mohammed, described as "a Prince from Bahrain", on the evening of his arrival.

2. I arranged to see Shaikh Mohammed at his hotel on the morning of 21 July, before he left for Beirut and Damascus. He was, as usual, very friendly and spoke fairly freely about his impressions of Cairo and his ideas on the way in which things should evolve in the Gulf.

3. Although I realise Shaikh Mohammed does not carry much weight, his views (with which you are no doubt familiar) do perhaps represent those of the more intelligent and outward looking younger Bahrainis and for that reason you may care to have a summary of what he said to me.

4. In telling me of his impressions of his visit to Cairo, he was quite definite that Nasser remains firmly in control. There was nobody in Nasser's entourage who could command the support and respect which Nasser does. Mohammed acknowledged that the influence of the USSR in the UAR was paramount and made the interesting remark (which confirms what we have heard from King Hussein and his entourage after their visit to Cairo) that Egypt could not start up another round of fighting with the Israelis because the Russians now had "technicians" in sufficient numbers, with the equipment they had provided, to maintain control over the actions of the Egyptian armed forces.

5. As regards Jordan, Mohammed expressed genuine concern for what might happen here. King Hussein, he told me, was important to moderate Arab states as an example of the sort of forward-looking, emancipated ruler which they themselves would like to have. If King Hussein disappeared the effects on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States would be very bad indeed. I said that this was our impression too. We discussed the difficulties facing the King and speculated on his chances of survival.

/6.

A. D. Parsons Esq., M.V.O., M.C.,
Bahrain.

CONFIDENTIAL

6. Turning to the Gulf, and in reply to my questions, Mohammed said that the position there for the moment was better than he had expected it to be following the recent crisis in the Middle East. The security forces in Bahrain were in effective control and the Ruler's policies seemed to have been justified. He saw no real improvement in the relations between Gulf States, except perhaps as regards Kuwait; while acknowledging the tactlessness of the Al Sabah, he thought that Kuwait's experiment in "controlled democracy" was proving successful.

7. In discussion about HMG's role in the Gulf Mohammed said he thought it a mistake for British spokesmen to talk about removing the Aden base to the Gulf. In fact, he said, Gulf Arabs were not very much aware of any increase in the number of British troops there - except perhaps in Sharjah. He thought that HMG was being dilatory in modernising their position in the Gulf. He had particularly in mind, when saying this, the lack of progress on widening the range of contacts between Gulf States and other Arab States. He foresaw that if we did not make a move towards allowing consulates of, say, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in some of the Gulf States, the latter would be isolated until the eleventh hour before a British withdrawal, with the sort of chaos ensuing which had threatened to overtake South Arabia. Mohammed seemed to think, despite the doubts I expressed, that it would be possible for the Gulf Rulers to negotiate with the Arab League on the opening of consulates and that they would not have to accept consulates of those Arab states whom they mistrusted.

8. Turning to the protection of the Gulf States once the British presence was withdrawn, Mohammed said that Saudi Arabia would not be an acceptable successor. Although Feisal was undoubtedly making some progress constitutionally, the Gulf States as a whole saw in any Saudi Arabian hegemony over their states an extinction of their own identities through being absorbed by Saudi Arabia. Bahrainis were apprehensive of the rival interests of Iran and Saudi Arabia where Bahrain was concerned. He said he personally hoped for the involvement of the United Nations in the problems of the Gulf States before it was too late. He thought that in South Arabia Britain had delayed disastrously long before seeking some sort of U.N. assistance. He very much hoped we would not commit the same mistake in the Gulf.

9. When I pointed out the weaknesses of the United Nations and their inability, for various reasons including political prejudices, to handle the sort of situation which we foresaw developing in the Gulf when we withdrew, Mohammed said he was not thinking in terms of United Nations forces but rather United Nations involvement in the constitutional and political problems. They would, as far as Bahrain was concerned, like to see a Defence Agreement with Britain on the lines of that between Britain and Kuwait, even after the engagement of the U.N. in their problems.

/10.

10. There is nothing very new in all this, but it does perhaps give some indication of the way in which the younger, educated Bahrainis are speculating about the future. In reply to a further question, Mohammed said he had been disappointed at the lack of progress in Bahrain with improvements and modifications to the system of government - but this is what he hoped might evolve out of United Nations involvement in the development of the States.

(J. P. Tripp)

Copied to:
H. G. Balfour-Paul (Bahrain)
M. S. Weir (Arabian Dept.)

(4)

Reference.....

P.A.

R ... IN
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=2 AUG 1967
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6

Sub : Mis/2520 : 19 July

Messenger from Bahrain in Cairo The director of the Bahrain Information Department, Shaykh Muhammad Muharak Al Khalifah, arrived in Cairo on 17th July with a message from the Ruler of Bahrain for President Nasir and a donation from the Arab people in Bahrain to the UAR war effort. (Cairo in Arabic 14.00 GMT 17.7.67)

P.A.
PZ

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(1031/67) CONFIDENTIAL 7

M. S. Weir Esq.,
Arabian Department.

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS

OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S

EMBASSY

Mr. Weir

Can asked to see this pp. of in.
I am afraid that 'Hussein only just surfaced (J. P. Tripp)

RECEIVED IN
ARCHIVES No. 5
28 JUL 1967
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AMMAN.

24 July 1967

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(6)

BRITISH RESIDENCY,
BAHRAIN.

2

(1041/35/67) Q 16/8

Sir R. Beaumont Highly encouraging.

Sir D. Allen 14/Weir 16/8

10 August, 1967.

RECEIVED IN ARCHIVES
21 AUG 1967
B3/15

Situation in the Southern Gulf

PG

Dear Michael

In preparation for going on leave from here on Saturday, I am sending you this round-up bringing the situation up to date since my despatch No. 19 of 23 June, dealing with the effects of the Middle East crisis. The substance of the crisis is still with us and no particular steps have yet been taken towards its solution. Consequently, the situation here has not changed very much and my round-up can be short.

2. On the surface, everything is now quiet. Not only are virtually all activities and contacts back to normal, but the security position beneath the surface is probably as quiet as it ever is. This is no doubt partly the result of the hot weather, of the schools being on holiday, and above all of the confused situation in the Arab countries which means that there is no clear line of Arab propaganda or policy which can arouse public opinion. In this situation, the fighting on the Suez Canal and River Jordan, the United Nations votes, and Nasser's speech of 23 July, have all passed without any public reaction. The oil situation (except in Muscat) remains unchanged; there are the normal restrictions on destinations, i.e. U.K., U.S.A. and Israel, but no more. In Bahrain, for example, there is no difficulty now about the bunkering of U.K. or U.S. naval vessels and there is not, as in Saudi Arabia, any obstacle to the delivery of oil to U.S. naval destinations in South East Asia. Muscat is a special case; since commercial oil exports have only just started and the Sultan is of course imposing no political restrictions on where they go to. The odd thing is that commercial considerations look like producing the same effect as if the Sultan had adopted the standard Arab destination boycott. There has been very little practical evidence in this area of the commercial boycott of British goods, which probably has not amounted to much more than a temporary reduction in the sale of cigarettes.

/3.

M. S. Weir, Esq.,
Arabian Department,
Foreign Office,
London, S. W. 1.

Mr. Rayboard Hon Sec
Mr. Fryer 25/8.
Mr. Hughes Hart Middle East dept.
Miss. Collings News dept.
[redacted] 4/9
P.A. P.G. 25/8

CONFIDENTIAL

Last Paper DS filed 69.

3. So much for the surface. Beneath the surface, all the Political Agents discern a good deal of shock at the discovery of the strength of pro-Israel sentiments in Britain as expressed in Parliament and the press during the crisis. It is this rather than a belief in "the lie" which has left what I fear will be a durable mark. This does not noticeably affect ordinary dealings with the people of the area, but it might well do so if, during the remainder of the current crisis, or in a future one, the full blast of Arab propaganda were turned against us on an Israel issue. This area has been brought more definitely within the ambit of Middle East beliefs and sentiments that it ever was before, and we must expect public opinion to follow more closely than before that of the other Arab countries. This will limit the room for manoeuvre of the Rulers, however hard they try to fight against it. At the very least, it will make it impossible for any Ruler to do other than follow the larger neighbouring Arab countries in applying oil restrictions. What Saudi Arabia and Kuwait say and do in this field will in general be followed in the Gulf States, though I think they will continue to keep strictly to the letter of agreed restrictions and will not stretch them as has been happening in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

4. Apart from these general reflections, there are one or two other points to make:-

(a) The start of commercial oil exports from the Sultanate has brought us to a new and significant, if not decisive, stage in the country's history. Bill Carden set out in his two recent letters to me (1013 of 13 July) and (1012 of 18 July) his reasons why he felt confident that the Sultan would embark on planned and orderly development. I agree with his assessment, but only time will tell whether the Sultan can move fast enough and decisively enough to contain the pressures that will arise from within the country, that he should be seen to be spending the money productively. There is some current evidence of "Imamate" subversive activity, but none of effective coordination between the "Imam", Sayyid Tariq and the Dhofaris. For the present, I can only endorse Carden's view that the first two groups are at present of little consequence. But the Dhofaris remain in the

/field

field, although pretty successfully harried at present, and we cannot see very far into the future. Meanwhile, the Sultan has remained solidly friendly with us and I hope that the earlier than expected start of oil exports will have finally removed his irritation over the ending of the subsidy in March. The timing of the proposed visit by the Minister of State seems to me good.

(b) The crisis has been an element in causing Shaikh Zaid to seek to become more independent of us. His thinking was already developing in this direction following the visit to Faisal in Jedda, and as he continues to acquire confidence as well as staff, it will probably continue to do so. He is showing this tendency in an increase in the sharpness with which he presses his view, e.g. on civil aviation, and in his evident desire to increase his international contacts. No major problem of principle has arisen yet and in general his political instinct is a sound one. Nevertheless, he is not always candid with us, this could cause our relationship to become a little strained, and we shall have to watch the position carefully. Otherwise, the Rulers are behaving well, and Shaikh Saqr of Ras al Khaimah is noticeably friendly. A point of some interest is, I think, that none of the important Rulers are showing any disposition to travel at present; they probably all feel that it is important to keep in close touch with their people while the crisis is rumbling in the background.

(c) The crisis has given the Ruler of Qatar an extra excuse, though not a genuine reason, for moving slowly in seeking a solution to his territorial and seabed dispute with Bahrain. He has still not sent his promised answer to the proposals made by Shaikh Isa when he visited Doha. The absence of progress on this point means that the main obstacle to wider cooperation among the Gulf States is still there and this is the main reason for the delay in arranging a meeting of all the Rulers of the Protected States. We will keep up the pressure on Shaikh Ahmed.

/(d)

(d) The position over other territorial disputes is not quite so static. Nadim Pachachi has been, as you know, engaged in research into the Abu Dhabi-Qatar seabed problem and we must hope that this will encourage fairly early discussions on the interrelated land and sea boundary problem. Zaid and Rashid, having had a mild long-range tiff, are expected to meet towards the end of this month and we hope that this will bring closer the ending of their land and sea frontier dispute.

5. The quietness of the present situation is not, I think, deceptive, and I do not expect any marked change over the next couple of months, except as a result of major developments outside the Gulf. Our main worries are likely to be with the decisions that might be taken at the meeting of Economic and Oil Ministers in Baghdad on 14 August, and at any subsequent summit or other inter-Arab meetings; however, the prospects of an agreed Arab policy being formulated seem from here to be slim. A break-down in Jordan would also, of course, be liable to produce a violent shock. Looking ahead to the end of the year we have to face the withdrawal from Aden and the psychological shock this may well cause.

6. I am sending a copy of this letter to Morgan Man, Geoffrey Arthur, Philip Adams, James Cable, Denis Wright and John Wilton.

Yours ever

Stewart Crawford

(Stewart Crawford)